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Mr Chris Tomes
Churchmead Church of England (VA) School
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Dear Mr Tomes

Short inspection of Churchmead Church of England (VA) School

Following my visit to the school on 2 July 2019 with Mary Davies, Ofsted Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in December 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your leadership team have the overwhelming support of the majority of parents and carers, who value the school's strong culture of respect based on Christian values. Parents speak positively about the support and guidance that their children receive. A typical comment from a parent responding to Ofsted's online questionnaire said, 'As well as placing an emphasis on academic progress, Churchmead places an importance on the place my child will take in society. There is a strong focus on moral and social development. My child has grown so much since starting Year 7.'

Pupils have positive attitudes to learning, and they show respect and kindness towards each other. Pupils develop a strong set of moral values. They take pride in their work, and pupils report that bullying is rare. Pupils believe that this is an inclusive school where it is acceptable to be different. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender pupils are accepted by staff and pupils. Pupils value the peer mentors, the 'Blue Guardian Angels', who support other pupils well, both socially and academically.

Leaders' and governors' plans to improve the school further rightly identify the key priorities for improvement, although on occasions their measures to judge the success of developments are not precise enough to know how well they have done. Leaders have developed a range of strategies to ensure that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment continually improves across both key stages. Leaders have been successful in improving rates of progress in key stage 3, an area for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Your strong emphasis on

improving pupils' literacy and their use of key subject vocabulary has been particularly successful in key stage 3. Consequently, pupils achieve broadly average, in line with other pupils nationally, in their GCSE examinations.

Leaders recognise that not all subjects are equally strong. Leaders have improved the rates of progress made by pupils, particularly in mathematics, since the previous inspection. In geography pupils continue to make strong progress. They use previous learning to solve increasingly complex problems. In these subjects teachers' questioning of pupils is planned and targeted well. Pupils' responses are more developed than previously and their understanding is deepening. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported well in the classroom and they make effective progress from their starting points.

Leaders know the school's strengths and areas for improvement well. Consequently, they are able to support teachers effectively to improve the quality of their teaching. Subject leaders value the opportunities to share good practice on a regular basis with a strong focus on effective teaching strategies. The overwhelming majority of teachers feel well supported and value the professional development opportunities.

Leaders have been effective in reducing the number of fixed-term exclusions, an area for improvement identified in the previous inspection report. Furthermore, incidents of poor behaviour continue to decline. Pupils now behave well both in and out of classrooms.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders ensure that all staff and governors are suitably trained and that they are aware of their responsibilities. The link governor for safeguarding routinely checks safeguarding arrangements to ensure that they are compliant. Parents are largely positive about the school, and the vast majority state that their children are happy and safe. Pupils feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe. They are confident there is an adult who they feel able to speak with if they have any concerns. Pupils have a strong understanding of how to stay safe including when online. Pupils reported that bullying is very infrequent, but that staff deal with it effectively when it occurs.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, we looked closely at specific aspects of the school's provision, including: the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements; how well leaders ensure that more pupils take subjects included in the English Baccalaureate; how well teachers are improving learning in mathematics and science; and how leaders are improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.
- Leaders have reviewed the curriculum offer so that more pupils are now taking the subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate. Leaders ensure that pupils have clear and effective careers education and guidance. Pupils are well informed to make their GCSE examination choices. As a result, more pupils are following a broad curriculum. The number of pupils taking languages, geography and history

has increased. Pupils are pleased that an additional language, Spanish, is now taught and provides greater choice than previously.

- Leaders, ably supported by subject leaders, have improved teaching and learning. As a result, standards have risen across most subjects. Teachers are more skilled at challenging pupils with insightful questioning, especially in mathematics, to improve pupils' understanding. Teachers' effective feedback supports pupils well to improve their work in mathematics. In science, too many variations in the quality of teaching still exist. Pupils do not always organise their workbooks well enough, so they do not have a valuable resource to learn from. Leaders recognise that further support of teachers is required to ensure that pupils improve even further in science.
- The school is inclusive and leaders are committed to reducing the differences in the outcomes between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils. Disadvantaged pupils now make better rates of progress than previously. Teachers use an agreed range of strategies that are having a clear impact on improving the progress of disadvantaged pupils to be more closely in line with that of their peers. Leaders have implemented strategies to ensure that disadvantaged pupils participate in the wider life of the school. However, leaders' monitoring and evaluation of how well disadvantaged pupils are doing is not yet embedded and needs to be more precise. Leaders recognise that disadvantaged pupils do not yet make as much progress as other pupils nationally.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the quality of teaching and learning across the curriculum is consistently good
- their evaluation of how well disadvantaged pupils are learning is more precise so that these pupils make similar rates of progress to that of other pupils nationally.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Oxford, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Windsor and Maidenhead. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Lee
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you, your senior team, subject leaders, the chair of the governing body and four other governors. They observed learning in classes, jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in lessons and reviewed a

sample of pupils' work, including disadvantaged pupils' books from key stages 3 and 4. Inspectors took account of the 43 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. They also took account of the 34 responses to Ofsted's confidential staff survey. They met with groups of pupils, representing Years 7, 9, and 10, and considered the 19 responses to the pupils' questionnaire. Inspectors analysed a range of school documentation, including the school development plan, information about pupils' achievement and attendance, safeguarding information, school policies and the school website.